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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 COLOMBO 001453

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SA, SA/INS, S/CT; NSC FOR E. MILLARD

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [CE](#) [NO](#) [FR](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: No movement regarding Tiger camp, as GSL reviews next steps; Tensions spike in the east

Refs: Colombo 1425, and previous

(U) Classified by James F. Entwistle, Charge'
d'Affaires. Reasons 1.5 (b,d).

1. (C) SUMMARY: There has been no movement regarding the unauthorized Tiger camp in the east. As the Norwegian facilitators continue to work on the issue, key ministers are giving us differing views on the possibility that the GSL may use force to try to resolve matters. In other peace track developments, tensions have spiked in the east with Muslims blaming the Tigers for a rash of recent killings. As the Tigers head to Paris to review the government's proposal for governing the north/east, the on-the-ground situation is growing increasingly fractious. END SUMMARY.

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No Movement on Camp
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2. (C) There has been no movement regarding the unauthorized Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) camp located in Trincomalee District in the east. According to reports from the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM), which has ruled that the LTTE's presence in the area violates the February 2002 ceasefire accord (see Reftels), the "Wan Ela" camp is still occupied by LTTE personnel. The SLMM regularly sends patrols to the area of the camp, which is located in Kinniya near Trincomalee city, but has detected no change in the camp's setup. Tomas Stangeland, a Norwegian Embassy poloff, told us on August 20 that the GoN continues to raise the issue with the LTTE, urging the group to comply fully with the SLMM's ruling. Stangeland related that his embassy's latest communication with the Tigers had taken place on August 19 and had not yielded any sign that the group planned to dismantle the camp anytime soon. Stangeland exhibited a high degree of exasperation with the LTTE's intransigence over the issue, but said he hoped the Tigers would reconsider their hard-line stance at their upcoming meeting in Paris (see Para five).

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GSL Mulls Next Steps
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3. (C) As the camp issue continues to simmer, key ministers involved in peace process issues are giving us differing views on the possibility that the Sri Lankan government may use force to try to resolve matters. In an August 18 meeting, Milinda Moragoda, Minister of Economic Reforms, told the Charge' that the government is losing patience with the LTTE's refusal to vacate the camp. Moragoda stated that the GSL "reserved the right for military action," but that any move would not take place until September, if then. He went on to state that if any action was taken it would be a "police action," with the military in a supporting role if needed. Moragoda described himself as somewhat "hawkish" on the issue, much more, he said, than Prime Minister Wickremesinghe. With Moragoda's threat to use force still ringing in his ears, the Charge' heard a contrary view of the issue in a conversation with Minister of Constitutional Affairs G.L. Peiris later on August 18. When queried about the camp issue and the GSL's reaction, Peiris -- who generally takes a "soft" stance re the LTTE -- replied that there was "no way" the government would undertake a police or military action to expel the LTTE from the camp since such a move could trigger a quick return to general hostilities.

4. (C) Asked about the GSL's somewhat confused stance on the camp, Stangeland remarked that his impression was that the government was seriously mulling over what to do, but had taken no decision to use force. Stangeland said he hoped the GSL abstained from force as "the situation could really get out of hand if there was a land confrontation" between the two sides. (Note: Since the peace process began in December 2001, there has been no serious military confrontation between the two sides on land. There have been several deadly

confrontations at sea, however.)

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Tigers to Paris
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15. (C) Amid the continuing tensions over the camp, a Tiger delegation left Colombo for Paris early August 20 to attend a Norwegian-facilitated conference focusing on the government's recent north/east interim arrangement proposal. Stangeland confirmed that S.P. Thamilselvan, the LTTE's political chief, was the head of the Tiger delegation. Karuna, the LTTE military chief in the east, was also on the delegation. In Paris, the LTTE team will meet up with pro-LTTE Tamils from Canada, the UK, Australia, the U.S., etc., who are also attending the conference. It is not certain whether chief LTTE negotiator Anton Balasingham will participate. Stangeland said the meeting was slated to begin on August 21 and last for about a week. Norwegian facilitators were set to participate in the last couple of days of the conference, he noted.

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Tensions Spike in the East
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16. (C) In other peace track developments, tensions have spiked in the east, with Muslims blaming the Tigers for four recent killings. The Tigers have not accepted responsibility for the slayings of the Muslims, although most observers believe they are to blame. Details of the killings follow:

-- On August 13, two Muslim postal workers were shot and killed near Trincomalee city. In protest, Muslims sponsored hartals (work stoppages) throughout the Eastern Province and the situation was described by contacts as "very tense." Following the killings, two Muslims were abducted near Trincomalee city by suspected LTTE militants on August 16, but were later released.

-- On August 17, two Muslim farmers were shot and killed in Samanthurai town in Ampara district. In protest, Muslims sponsored more hartals, as well as rallies and demonstrations throughout the east.

17. (SBU) Reacting to the spike in communal tensions, the GSL sent additional military units to the east. Police units were also dispatched following an incident on August 16 in which four police officers were injured as they tried to disperse an angry mob near Mutur, a Muslim-dominated town in the east. Police imposed a dusk-to-dawn curfew in Mutur and at some other sites along the eastern coast.

18. (C) Muslim politicians have expressed outrage about the killings. Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) leader and Minister of Ports Rauf Hakeem rushed to the east on August 18 to assess the situation. Hakeem said the government was not doing enough to protect Muslims and urged it to do more to restrain the LTTE. Addressing reporters on August 19, Hakeem stated that "the LTTE is trying to intimidate Muslims and make them servile." Hakeem further noted that his future support for the governing coalition would be conditional on Muslim representation as a separate participant in any peace talks with the LTTE that take place. (In the past, Muslims participated in the talks as members of the government's delegation.) In other Muslim reaction, Ferial Ashraff, head of the National Unity Alliance (NUA) party and a MP with close links to President Kumaratunga, ominously demanded that the government take action before Muslim youths were compelled to take up arms against the LTTE.

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COMMENT
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19. (C) It is encouraging news that the Tigers are meeting in Paris at such a high level to review the government's north/east administration proposal. The Tigers have seemed to go out of their way to flag their interest in the proposal and their possible interest in returning to the face-to-face talks. All of this seems to be a net positive for the peace process. As witnessed by the unresolved camp issue, the killings of the Muslims in the east, and the larger issues of LTTE assassinations of Tamil opponents, however, the on-the-ground situation is growing increasingly fractious, with the cumulative weight of the Tigers' nasty behavior steadily adding up. Although support for the peace track remains strong among the general public, patience with the Tigers will inevitably sail downward if they fail to curb the violence and aggressive behavior. END

COMMENT.

110. (U) Minimize considered.

ENTWISTLE